

## **Romans 10 & 11**

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, April 8, 2018

Before we dive in this morning, I just want to make a pitch for the Coffee with the Cagles on Friday night. For those of you that have been in the church for a little while, we were doing a Meet the Pastor, where we had everybody from the church come over last year. But with Care Groups starting up, we had to kind of figure out what to do next. So, this is what we decided to do as a family is have Coffee with the Cagles. If you've never been to our home or you're a new visitor, please make it a point, if you can, to come Friday night at six o'clock. We'll have coffee for you, maybe some pizza. We're trying to think of some other "C" words, you know, cupcakes, croissants but I guess, like I said last week, I don't over promise anything. So we'll just stick with coffee and maybe some pizza. But please come Friday night. We'd love to have you over for that.

All right, well if you would go ahead and turn in your Bibles with me to the book of Romans, and as you're doing that, if you are joining us for the first time today, we're on the ... toward the tail end of a series we started back in February called The Book of Romans in Three Months. This is we're studying this great book over a three-month or a 12-week period of time. It's actually going to be about 13 weeks because I forgot to count the introduction. So the series is about 13 weeks or so which is still pretty good, because Romans is a big book, isn't it?

I mean if you've ever read this thing before, there's a lot in here. It's 16 chapters in English and 7,000 words in Greek. And if you rolled it all up in a scroll, which they would have done in the first century, it would have been several feet long and weighed a considerable amount. I don't know how you would have carried this thing, maybe on horseback. Maybe you would have put it in a cart to take it to the city of Rome.

And speaking of that, you don't have to turn there, but this is an interesting thing to point out: toward the end of the book in Romans 16:1, it says, "I commend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea; that you receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints." That last phrase in that verse Romans 16:1, "That you receive her in the Lord," was often used of messengers in the early church. It was used of those who delivered a letter.

Now the interesting thing about that is that was referring to a woman, Phoebe. Some say she might have been one of the early deaconesses in the church. But the point is if that's so, if she was a delivery person, this is the only letter that we know of in the New Testament that was delivered by a lady; a pretty interesting thing to point out there. She came from Cenchrea, brought this letter to the City of Rome, this huge bulky letter.

But the point is Romans from start to finish is a unique book. I mean however you look at it, this is a one-of-a-kind thing that Paul wrote here. It's one-of-a-kind in history, one-of-a-kind in its content and it's had a massive impact on the church. I told you before that Augustine Martin Luther and John Wesley were all converted reading the Book of Romans. And if that was all, that would be enough. Those three men had a huge impact in church history.

Some of you have probably been converted or impacted reading the Book of Romans. As a matter of fact, by a show of hands, how many of you have been impacted in your Christian life reading this book? I mean everybody, right? I was talking with someone from our church last week who said they were converted while reading the book of Romans because they said it put God in His place and me in mine. That's the Christian life, amen? That's what it's all about - putting God in His place and putting us down beneath Him.

And Romans does this like no other book in history. It exalts God in a way nothing else can. And that's why we're studying it together on Sunday mornings, because we want you to exalt God today. And that's why we're particularly looking at our passage that I'll get to here in just a moment. The passage we're going to look at this morning can drive you to your knees like nothing else.

But before we get there, let me kind of introduce our chapter that we're going to look at this way. On November 10th, 1975, a thousand-foot freight ship called the Edmund Fitzgerald was traveling across the Great Lakes from Canada to the US when it ran into a storm that put 30-foot waves across the bow. It created waves that were literally three stories high and threatened to swallow up the ship. And as it went through those waves, the captain of another ship close by watched his sonar and grew concerned. And he radioed in for help.

In fact, according to his testimony in court, he said that he was watching the sonar dial, watching the Edmund Fitzgerald, when all of a sudden it would just disappear. He said one minute it was there and the next minute it was just gone. In less than ten seconds it vanished and sank to the bottom of the lake. And he said the strangest thing about it is that right before the ship sank, right before it disappeared, the Edmund Fitzgerald said over the radio, "We are holding our own. We're holding our own."

And I mention that because I think if the lost world today could give one message to the church, that would be it, "We are holding our own. We're doing fine. We're good people, we're not hurting anybody, leave us alone," while all the while they're vanishing and sinking to the bottom of the ocean.

It was John Steinbeck, the novelist, who kind of summed up the problem this way. He said, "We've come a long way, because we can shoot rockets into space and put people on the moon. But with all our advances in science and technology, we can't cure anger or discontentment." He's right, isn't he? For all the advances we've made as a society, we can't cure our sin problem. As a matter of fact, all science and technology has done is get us to our sin problem faster.

I've talked with people who lived in the '70s and '80s and I remember the days, when if you wanted to get something pornographic, you had to leave your home and go buy it at the store. Today, you just have to turn your phone on. The Bible says it's always been this way with us. We've always had a problem with sin, we've always gravitated towards it, it's nothing new.

For example, there are four chapters, I think I've told you this before but there are four chapters in the Bible that don't talk about sin and only four. Do you know what they are? It's the first two and the last two. Genesis one through two and Revelation 21 through 22 don't talk about sin. And

other than that, this book is consumed with it. As a matter of fact, the word “sin” appears more than a thousand times in the Bible.

I told you last week that the Bible is a book about love, and it is because the word “love” appears a thousand times. But you can parallel that with the word “sin”. It appears over and over and over again in the pages of this book. Just a few examples of this, because it really sets the stage for what we're going to talk about today, let me read a few passages to you in Scripture that talk about our sin problem.

Psalm 51:5, David says, “Behold I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me.” When David says, “In sin my mother conceived me,” he doesn't mean my mom sinned when she had me. She committed adultery, something like ... he's not referring to that. David says, “I was born with a sin nature. I sin naturally,” he says. “I sin without even trying. You don't have to teach me to sin,” David says.

We've got a lot of young parents in this room. Can you also say “amen” to that? You don't sit your child down and say, “Listen, you're being too good, and this has got to stop, because you're making the rest of us look bad.” I have never had that conversation with my wonderful children, who slobbered all over my jacket before I got up here by the way. They know how to do that. That's what David says.

Genesis 8:21 takes this a step further and says, “The intent of man's heart is evil from youth.” So now it goes from birth to youth. Now it goes from childhood into the teenage years. And the phrase, “The intent of man's heart,” is a way of saying the motive of man's heart, the desire of man's heart. See the problem is we sin because we want to. The problem is we sin because that's our intent. And it goes that way from birth through youth. For some of you, the worst things you did, you did while you were young. You sowed your wild oats when you were young, that's what that text is talking about.

One more just to get our minds around this. Ecclesiastes 9:3. It says, “Furthermore, the hearts of the son of man are full of evil and insanity is in them, in their hearts all throughout their lives.” So now it goes all throughout our lives and it drives us to insanity. The text says it makes us mad. J. C. Ryle said, “An old man doesn't sin as much as a young man, not because he doesn't want to, but because he's too tired. He doesn't have the strength anymore. If he had the strength,” Ryle says, “he would go after it just like he did as a young man.”

Now let me ask you something as we talk about all of this. Let me ask you something that should be on your minds. Okay, if that's the case, well what do we do about it? Have you ever wondered that? What do we do about our sin problem? We're born into it, we grow up in it and we die in it, that sounds horrible. But what do we do? How do we escape our sin? If you think about it, you can't escape your nature, you can't get away from yourself. So, what do we do?

And that leads us to our passage for this morning. Because in this passage Paul says, “You turn to God for help.” That's how you get relief, that's how you get salvation. You turn to the Lord. Our sin is so bad, our fall is so great, our nature is so polluted that God has to do it all. He has to

call us, choose us and bring us to Christ. He shows us with the people of Israel, which we'll talk about in a moment, but before we get there, let's walk through our passage.

The book of Romans actually builds up to this. If you look in Romans one through three, Paul says that "all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God," just like we talked about, "but are justified freely by His grace. They're justified freely through faith in Christ." That's how God brings us relief. That's how He gives us victory over our sin through Jesus Christ. And then He goes on to explain in chapters four through five what this looks like. It looks like faith, the kind of faith that Abraham had. It looks like trusting in the promises that God can deliver us.

Then he goes on in chapter six through seven to say it looks like fighting sin. Christians fight sin, we put it to death. It's been said that a lost person runs to sin, a Christian runs from it. Because chapter eight says we can have victory. If you look in Romans 8:28, Paul talks about the victory that we have in Christ when he says, "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good, to those who love God to those who are called according to His purpose." Then he says in verse 29 of chapter eight, "For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the first born among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified."

Just explaining some of that talking about the victory we have in Christ, the word "predestined" there comes from the Greek word *proorizo*, which means "to choose beforehand", meaning that God chose beforehand who would be saved. He causes all things to work together for their good, because salvation is entirely of Him, it all goes back to Him. We still have to believe, as we'll see in a moment. We trust in Christ, but salvation is of the Lord.

It was one church scholar who said, "That God must have loved me before I was born, because afterwards He would have no reason to." That's what this is saying, and that's the book of Romans, right? We gave God no reason to love us. We gave Him no reason to treat us like this, causing all things to work together for our good. The word "all things", it means all things, everything. In His own eternal counsels, in eternity past, before we were born, God chose to set His affection on us.

And that brings us to Romans nine, because in Romans nine Paul relates this to the people of Israel. And he says, "Okay, Christians are predestined. I get that." It says that right here, "But what about Israel? Are they predestined as well? Did God set His affection on them?" Then Paul says, "God causes all things to work together for good," does that apply to the Jews?" And I read this passage to you last week, but I want to read it again, because Paul shows you his heart as he writes this. And this is all building up to chapters ten and 11. But if you look in Romans 9:1, this is Paul's heart as he gets into his argument discussion.

In Romans 9:1, he says,

1 I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience testifies with me in the Holy Spirit, 2 that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart. 3 For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my

kinsmen according to the flesh, 4 who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons, and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises, 5 whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.

If you notice as you read that in verse two, Paul says, "I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart." That's where this is coming from, from a heart of sorrow and grief. He says in verse three, "For I could wish myself accursed and separated from Christ." He just said in Romans 8:39, "Nothing can separate us from the love of God." Now Paul says, "I wish I could be separated." The idea is I wish I could go to hell *for them* so they wouldn't have to. That's an emotional statement. Paul's not saying I can do that, and he's not even saying that I really at the end of the day want to do that, but I love them this much.

This is important to remember because the doctrine of election is a very controversial doctrine today, at least it is in the States. I'm new to Canada, so I don't know how controversial it is here. But I want you to see Paul's heart as he writes this. He's not writing this out of a tone of controversy. There's no hostility in his tone. He's writing this with a lump in his throat. I mean Romans nine through 11 are written ... you could read the tears on the page. He loves these people.

As a matter of fact, if you remember toward the end of Paul's ministry in the book of Acts, the Book of Acts ends with Paul going to prison on account of who? The Jews. He spends all of his ministry ministering to the Gentiles. He says, "I'm going back to Jerusalem to minister to my people." His friends say, "Don't go. They're going to beat you up because that's what they always do." He goes, he gets beaten up and thrown in prison for the Jews. He loves them and now he's writing in Romans, and he's saying "Is there any hope for them now. They've crucified the Messiah, they've killed the Son of God! Is there any future?"

Listen, you might have done some bad things in your life, but you've never killed the Son of God, amen? Not literally. I mean you might have committed some awful sins like we just talked about, but you didn't say, "Crucify Him, crucify Him, let His blood be on us and our children." These people said that. And now Paul is saying, "What's their future?"

And he goes on to say, "God will eventually restore them." And I want to tell you no matter what you've done today, there is hope for you today. I mean no matter what you've done, no matter how bad it is, it's not this bad. If God could forgive Israel, He can forgive you. If God has a future for them, He has a future for you.

By the way the name Israel means "he struggles with God". That's what it means in Hebrew. If you remember the story, Jacob is wrestling with the angel and the angel says, "Your name shall no longer be Jacob but Israel, for you have striven with God and with men and have prevailed." They struggled with God constantly. They fought Him their entire existence, and some of you have done that today. You have fought with God, you have struggled with Him. And I just want to say, this passage should be an encouragement to you this morning. If God could restore them after centuries of disobedience, He can do the same for you.

Now I told you last time that Romans nine through 11 is one big thought in the mind of Paul, it's just one big idea. So we want to look at it that way this morning. We looked at Romans nine last week. So, this week if you're taking notes in Romans ten through 11, Paul is going to give us (or tell us) four more things about the love of God as it relates to Israel. Last week we looked at three things about the love of God as it relates to them. This week we're going to look at four more things about His love as it relates to these people. This is a passage about love, this is a passage about God's eternal affection.

So, there's four things about it. The first one is this: They don't know the love of God, because they won't believe. They don't know the love of God, because they refuse to believe. They still struggle with God. As a nation, Paul says, at this point in the first century, they still reject the Messiah. In all their years of sinning, you would think they would finally get the point, right? In all their years of disobedience as a people, you would think they would finally wise up and come to their senses, but they don't do that. And Paul says "why?" in chapter ten. If you want to look in verse one.

He says, "Here's why they keep doing this." He says, "Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation." "Their" referring to the Jews that he was talking about in chapter nine. It says, "For I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge. For not knowing about God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God." He says, "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes."

It's interesting that Paul says so much about belief in a section on election. And it's interesting that he says so much about man's responsibility after all he said in Romans nine. As a matter of fact, if you want to kind of put it in a big overview, Romans nine talks about God's election, Romans ten talks about man's belief and then chapter 11 goes back into the topic of election. Because in Paul's mind the two go together. Now he doesn't say how it all works, that's a mystery but God elects people and people choose them. He predestines us but we must believe.

And he ties this into Israel here in chapter ten, and he says their sin is their fault. They're responsible for it. Because they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God in verse two. Now that means they didn't put themselves under it, they didn't submit to that. And verse two says, "For I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge." It doesn't mean they're stupid, it means they're not saved. As a nation, they don't have a saving knowledge of Christ. They're zealous, they have passion, but it's for the wrong things.

Verse four says, "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes," And we could go on to add there, "And they don't believe." They don't accept the Messiah. That phrase, "Christ is the end of the law," in verse four is a very interesting one because it means that when you trust in Christ, you come to the end of the law. You come to the end of righteousness. You can't get any more righteous than when you trust in Jesus Christ.

About a century ago. the only road into Los Angeles was an old dirt path called the Santa Fe Trail and if you wanted to get into LA, you had to take that trail, it was the only way in and out.

But once you got to LA, you didn't say "Where is Los Angeles?", because you were in Los Angeles. You didn't say "I've got to work my way to the city," because you were already there. It's the same way in the Christian life. When you trust in Christ, you have arrived at righteousness. When you believe in Him, you're already there. So, you don't go around and say, "Where's my righteousness? I have to earn my righteousness." And the Jews didn't get that. They didn't understand.

Verse three says they sought to establish a righteousness of their own. They did works and works and works and works. They kept commandment after commandment after commandment. Paul says that's nuts.

This is important because before we get into all this stuff about election and God's choice of Israel, Paul says that the Jews are lost because they want to be lost. They're not saved as a people. There is a remnant, and we'll talk about that, but they don't know God as a people in a saving way, because they have rejected Him of their own free will. And how that works with election I don't know, that's a mystery, but that's what the text says.

And I wonder if there's any of you here this morning who can relate to this. If there's any of you here this morning who don't know God simply because you don't want to. You're not saved because you love your sin that we just talked about a moment ago. The choice is entirely your own, the decision is entirely your own. Christ is there for the taking, righteousness is there in front of your eyes, but you want to keep working and working and working your way to heaven. Or you want to say, "I'm holding my own. I'm fine."

Last week in Saskatchewan, we saw a horrible tragedy when the Humboldt Broncos Hockey team was in a bus crash. And I won't go into the details of that, you know the story, but one minute they were doing fine and the next minute the lot of them were in eternity. And I mention that because we're all going to experience what they went through, amen? We're all going into eternity one day. I mean they went suddenly, they went unexpectedly, which was the tragedy of the whole thing, but we're all going there.

And the question is, when you get into eternity, what are you going to say for yourself? When you stand before God, what are you going to tell Him? Are you going to tell Him, "I'm holding my own?" You're not going to say that. Nobody's going to say that before God. What are you going to say? You're going to say, "I'm doing fine?"

Listen, you know what you're not going to say? And this is important because it ties directly into this passage. Do you know what you're not going to say? You're not going to say, "I'm not responsible for my life because You didn't choose me." You're not going to say that. You're not going to say, "God it's your fault I lived like that because I'm not elect." That's not in this passage.

There's a real danger in studying a doctrine like this. One of the dangers that you can be tempted to say is, "It is God's fault for my sin." It is never God's fault for your sin. James 1:13-14 says, "Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am being tempted by God'; for God cannot be tempted. He Himself does not tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed

by his own lust.” You are tempted when you are carried away by your own lust, your own free will. And when you stand before God without Christ He will tell you that.

So, you want to say, “Christ is the end of the law for righteousness for me. He is my final destination, He's my only hope.” And the Jews in Paul's day, they didn't get that, and therefore they were lost.

And that leads to the next thing Paul says about the love of God as it relates to Israel. And that is this: They don't know the love of God because they're not being told about it. They don't know the love of God because they don't believe, and they don't know the love of God because they're not being told about it. Paul shifts responsibility here from the Jews to the church. And he says, “The Jews don't believe because you're not telling them the gospel.” It's a very humbling thing to say but he says, “They're lost, because we're not evangelizing them.”

And he goes on in verse five to tell us what faith looks like from verses five through 13. And if you look in verse 14, skipping down a little bit (we're not going to be able to read everything for the sake of time), but he says in verse 14, he says, “How will they call,” this is a rhetorical question, it answers itself. “How will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? And how will they preach unless they're sent? Just as it is written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news of good tidings.’”

That last statement is kind of funny to me. It's a quotation from Isaiah 52:7. When I read that, I thought, “That's really strange because nobody ever notices your feet,” right? I've been in church my entire life and no one has ever told me, “You have lovely feet. I just love what you've done with your feet today. How did you make your feet...?” Maybe it's happened to you, but it's never happened to me. It's a figurative expression.

It means it's a beautiful thing to tell people the gospel. It's a beautiful thing to tell them the good news which is the Greek word for gospel here. Because verse 17 says, “So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.” Paul says the only way for Israel to be saved is for them to hear the word of Christ. The only way for them to believe, or for anyone to believe, is for us to tell them.

In our Wednesday night Bible study with the men, we're going through the Donald Whitney's book “Spiritual Disciplines for the Church”. And in it, Whitney says God could have spread the gospel a lot of different ways, right? He could have sent angels to do this. He could have written it in the clouds, He could have spelled the good news across the sky in the stars. You know what He did? He sent sinners like you and me. That's what He does. He sends the ordinary people, average Joes who aren't anything special, because that gives Him more glory, you see? And when you go tell them it's beautiful. It's a lovely thing.

I was telling our care group last Sunday that I got saved at a camp for Christian athletes that doctrinally speaking was a bad camp. I wouldn't recommend it to anybody today. But they told me the gospel, and God saved me there, and it was beautiful to me, still is. I mean that was, I don't know 17 years ago. I'm still eternally grateful for what they told me there. Some of you



come from places where you could say the same thing, that the doctrine was bad, they got some things wrong, but they told you the good news and God saved you and it was beautiful.

Listen, you don't have to have a beautiful presentation when you tell someone about Jesus, you just have to have beautiful feet. You just have to go tell them. You don't have to have all your "T's" crossed and all your "I's" dotted, you just have to go, because they need to hear about Christ. That's how God has sovereignly chosen to spread His kingdom is through us telling sinners about Christ. "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ."

And Paul says, "Israel's not hearing it right now. They're missing out because we're not going to them." May that never be said about Chilliwack. May that never be said about Sardis or Promontory or any of our areas around here. We need to go and remember how beautiful are the feet of those who bring the good news. By the way, another interesting thing about feet is that nobody notices them. And when you go and spread the gospel and nobody notices you, just remember that's the way it's going to be. Paul says so right here. But that's the whole point. It's so God will get glory out of that and not us.

That leads to the next thing Paul says, just going through this passage about the love of God as it relates to Israel. And this one goes back into the doctrine of election. So remember chapter nine is about election. Chapter ten, man's responsibility, chapter 11 goes back to election which is why we're trying to put all this together, so you can see it. Here's the next thing Paul says about the love of God and that's this: In spite of all of this, God has not rejected the Jews. Even though they don't believe as a people, and nobody's telling them (or not to the extent they should have been in the first century), Paul says, "In spite of that God has not rejected them. He's not abandoned His people."

Paul was just asked, "Is there any hope for Israel?" That's what started this whole discussion in chapter nine. Now he answers that, and he says, "There is hope." And if you look in chapter 11:1 he says it this way. He says, "I say then, God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be!"

That phrase, "May it never be," is one we've seen several times in the book of Romans. As a matter of fact, I think Romans uses that phrase more than any other book in the New Testament, but it's a Greek phrase *me genoito*, which is the strongest way to say "no" in the Greek language. It means "No, no, no, no! By no means." Some translations say "God forbid". "God forbid that He should reject His people," Paul says.

And then he goes on in verse one to explain that. And he says, "For I too I'm an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin." He says, "God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel, "Lord, they have killed Your prophets, they have torn down Your altars, and I alone am left, and they're seeking my life."

That's a reference to 1st Kings chapter 19. And if you remember that story, Elijah's being chased around the country by Queen Jezebel, and she's out to kill him. One of the worst Queens in history, she's out to kill him, and Elijah prays to the Lord, "Lord, they have killed Your prophets,

they have torn down Your altars, and I alone am left and they're seeking to kill me," he says. And in response to that, the Lord says (and this was quoted in verse four there of chapter 11), the Lord says, "I've kept for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal." In other words, there is a remnant of Jews. Paul says, "I'm one of them."

He uses that word later, that word "remnant" in verse five, but a remnant is something that's left over after everything else has gone. It's those who are faithful when the rest of the nation turns against God. Paul says God has always had one of those. Even in the worst of times, even when Jezebel was Queen over Israel and Ahab, and Elijah was on the run. And Paul says the same thing goes for today. There is a remnant today. They're small, which is what the word remnant means. There's only a handful, but he says, "Look at me," he says, "I'm a Jew, and I believe."

Because verse five says, if you go on in the passage, it says, "In the same way then, there is also come to be at the present time a remnant according to God's gracious choice. But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace." Paul says God is saving the Jews today by grace, not on the basis of works, just like it is for everybody else, right? I mean if you're going to get into heaven it's going to be by grace, not because you've earned it. You were born in sin, you grew up in sin, you die in sin and therefore the only way for you to get to heaven is by grace. It's that way in the Old Testament, it's that way in the New Testament. He has to choose you before you were born, because afterwards He would have no reason to.

You can imagine (a little background and context here), you can imagine being a Jew in the first century and seeing your people do all of this and thinking, "Boy it's got to be over, right? It's got to be over. I mean the Messiah came and we killed him." And if I understand my history correctly, Paul wrote the book of Romans before AD 70 when the city of Jerusalem fell because according to church history. Paul was killed in Rome around AD 67. So, if my understanding is correct, Paul wrote this letter some time before Jerusalem fell.

And I was looking up what that would have been like back then, and one historian named Josephus says this about the fall of Jerusalem. He was an eyewitness to it. He says, "This is what it looked like when Jerusalem fell." He said,

Throughout the city people were dying of hunger in large numbers and enduring unspeakable suffering. In every house the merest hint of food sparked violence, and close relatives fell to blows, snatching from one another the pitiful supports of life. No respect was paid even to the dying; the ruffians searched them, in case they were concealing food somewhere in their clothes. And gaping with hunger like mad dogs, lawless gangs went staggering and reeling through the streets, battering upon the doors like drunkards, and they were so bewildered with hunger that they broke into the same house two or three times in one hour looking for food.

He said,

Need drove the starving to gnawing on anything. Refuse which even animals would reject was collected and turned into food. In the end they were eating belts and shoes and the

leather stripped off their shields. Tufts of withered grass were devoured and sold in bundles for large amounts of money.

And he says that eventually the Romans invaded the city of Jerusalem and just destroyed it. They ripped it apart brick by brick.

In fact, you can actually go to the city today, my wife and I have been there, and you can see the remains of this event in the temple mount. You guys have seen pictures of the Dome of the Rock and it looks really big. It's like a two or three-story building. But the reason it looks so big, is because it's 700 meters above the ground, it's very high, high hill. You can see where the Romans took bricks from the temple in the first century and threw them down to the street below and cracked the pavement. You can actually walk on the cracked pavement today from that event, and you can go see the pile of stones that were thrown off the temple.

And you can imagine watching all of that or hearing about it as a Jew and saying, "It's over." I mean there's no way you're going to come back from that. There's no way you're going to recover. And Paul says here in Romans 11, "They will one day do that, they will one day recover because in the same way then, there is going to be at the present time a remnant according to God's gracious choice." Paul says, "Israel will be saved by grace just like you and me, they'll be saved by God's choice." I've told you guys before, you can't un-predestine yourself. Right? It doesn't make sense. You can't un-elect yourself, and it's the same way with these people from the Old Testament days.

And to address this, Paul goes on to give us one of the toughest passages in the book of Romans. He tells us one more thing about the love of God. By the way, if you're wrestling with some of this, this is deep stuff. I've wrestled with this all week. And if you have questions feel free to come up and ask me and I will humbly tell you if I don't know. This is some deep stuff. But, one more thing about the love of God is this: Israel will one day be restored.

He says, "They don't know the love of God because they don't believe. And they don't know it because they're not being told." In spite of that, he says, "God has not rejected them, He's not abandoned his people," and that leads to one more thing Paul says about the love of God as it relates to the Jews. Books have been written about this by the way. Classes in seminary, whole classes have been taught on this. So, we're not going to get to everything here but let's say a few words.

One day Israel will be restored, restored to a place of prominence is the idea here. Restored to a place of importance in the world. Paul says in verse 11 going through Romans chapter 11, he goes on and he says, "I say then, they did not stumble as to fall, did they?" Here's the word again, "May it never be!" *Me genoito* is that word again, "No, no, no, no! God forbid that Israel stumbled as to fall." That means fall completely, fall away from history. Because verse 11 says, "By their transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles, to make them jealous."

And he says in verse 12 ... let me maybe skip on down a little bit here just for the sake of time. As a matter of fact, if you look in verse 16, we're going to look at some of these different passages maybe quicker than we'd like. But if you look in verse 15 actually he says, "For if their

rejection [Israel's rejection] is the reconciliation of the world," the world meaning Gentiles to Christ, "What will their acceptance be but life from the dead? If the first piece of dough is holy, the lump is also; and if the root is holy, the branches are too." Now there's a lot in this passage, but for the sake of time let me just breeze through it quickly. In verse 11 he says, "Israel did not stumble as to fall," and in verse 12 he says, "They will be fulfilled," and we'll talk about that word in a moment. Verse 15 says, "They will be accepted," and verse 16 gives us two word pictures.

One is a lump of dough, if you look in your Bibles there. And the idea is that if the first part of a lump of dough, "first" meaning the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as holy, set apart for the Lord, then the rest will be as well. "If God made a promise to them, He will keep it" is the idea. And the second word picture is what he's going to develop is that of an olive tree.

Olive trees are very common in Israel. As a matter of fact, I looked it up recently. Israel's one of the world's top producers of olive oil, so this is kind of fitting for the people of Israel and for the landscape. Verse 17 says, "But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, you Gentiles, you non-Jews," he says, "Being a wild olive branch, were grafted in among them and became partaker of the rich root of the olive tree, do not be arrogant toward the branches; but if you are arrogant, remember that it is not you who supports the root, but the root supports you." In other words, you Gentiles are coming into the tree at the last minute. He says, "You're coming into the kingdom of God after Israel so don't be arrogant toward them. Don't be rude because it's not you who supports the root, but the root supports you." In other words, they wrote the Bible, not you. They gave birth to the Messiah, not you.

He goes on in verse 25 skipping down a little bit for the sake of time. He says, "For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery - so that you will not be wise in your own estimation - that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; and so all Israel will be saved." Now there's some deep stuff in here which is why Paul calls this a mystery. But the idea is that Israel has been hardened as a nation, as a people, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. That means "full number" or "complete number," that's the same word we saw in verse 12. It means that God has a certain number of Jews to save and a certain number of Gentiles. In His sovereignty, in His sovereign election, God has chosen to save a certain number of Jews and Gentiles, and the Jews will be hardened until the fullness of the Gentiles comes in, "and so all Israel will be saved".

That means ... there's several interpretations of that. That could mean all Israel who believes or all Israel on the earth, that God will restore them to a place of prominence. Now I appreciate your patience with me walking you through all that, that's deep waters. But the point is God is not through with the Jews. Now, you're probably wondering, "Okay that's all great but what does that have to do with my life?" And that's what Paul answers for us at the end of this chapter.

If you look in verse 33, if you say this is deep stuff, Paul says it is deep, but here's an application of this. In verse 33, he said, "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! 'For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became His counselor? Or who has first given to Him that it might be

paid back to Him again?' For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen."

Paul says, "You may not have your mind around all of this." And that's okay. I don't think I do either. But he says, "At the end of the day, you should worship the depth and the wisdom and the power of God," amen? I mean, to think that God would love a people like this boggles the mind. And to think that God would love a people like you and me boggles the mind. That phrase "For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things," is neat because it means everything goes back to God. Some call this the circle of eternity. God chooses the Jews, God saves the Jews (or saves a remnant of them) and He will save them yet again. God chooses us. He saves us in time, and He will save us in heaven. It all goes back to God.

I don't know where everyone's at on the issue of Israel, but I hope this is where you're at on the issue of God. I hope you believe it all goes back to Him. To say it another way, I hope you have a big view of God this morning. You know, a famous preacher in the States says that after he had been preaching for a few years he had a visit from a professor from a seminary, a preaching lab professor who listened to him on a Sunday morning. And the professor told him, he said, "You still have a big view of God." Do you have a big view of God this morning? Do you put God on His throne and man down beneath him? Paul says here, as he's going through all this theology, he says, "Oh, the depths." Can you say, "Oh, the depths?"

Listen friends, the most amazing thing about heaven is not going to be the angels or the streets of gold. The most amazing thing about it is that we're going to be there, amen? You're going to walk around for eternity with your mouth open wondering "What am I doing here?", and wicked people like you and me, sinful people like us. Does that cause you to worship this morning? Does that give you a big view of God?

In his book *Your God is Too Small*, J. B. Phillips wrote a list of all the things God is not. And I'm not going to explain them to you, but let me just read them out. He says, "God is not a policeman, and God is not an indulgent parent, and He's not a grand old man, and He's not a meek and mild sissy, and He's not a heavenly pillow, and He's not a managing director." But he says this, he says, "God is someone who suffered and sweated and died for us at the cross. And God is someone who loves us and cares about us from all eternity, and God is someone who saves sinners." A God like that deserves our worship, doesn't He? He deserves our praise. Will you give Him that today, and will you worship Him through the Lord's Supper as we take it here in a moment?

Let me close us in a word of prayer. Heavenly Father we thank You for this privilege this morning of diving into a deep section of Scripture. And I just pray in humility, Lord, that justice was done to it. The most important thing Lord, I guess at the end of the day whenever we study Scripture, is that we have a better view of You from it. And I pray that will be the case today Father.

We thank You for what You have done for us at the cross, we thank You that You have saved any of us. I think any of us could look at our lives, even this past week, and give plenty of reasons why You should not have saved us. And yet in Your mercy You have saved those who

trust in Christ. And Lord I pray if there's any of you here this morning who have not trusted in Him that they would, that they would come humbly and broken to the cross.

Lord as we approach Your supper and Your table, we pray that You would be honoured and glorified at our hearts as we do this. We thank You for the memorial of what Your Son has done, and we pray that our view of Him and our love for Him would grow deeper every day. And we pray this in Jesus' name, amen.